

POPULAR SPORTS, EXHIBITIONS, AND DRAMA 601

the French Croquemitaine, Bucco, a half-stupid, half-sarcastic buffoon, Pappus (the later Venetian Pantalon) the fussy old man, and Casnar, the French Cassandre. Scaramucca or Fracassa was added to satirize the Spanish soldier. He was recognized as the Miles Gloriosus of Plautus.¹ The Spanish trooper was a boastful coward. He called himself the son of the earthquake and lightning, cousin of death, or friend of Beelzebub.² At the marriage of Alphonso d'Este comedies of Plautus were acted for effect and conventional pretense, but they were considered tiresome, and interludes of pantomime, ballet, clown tricks, peasant farce, mythology, and fireworks were introduced to furnish entertainment.³

667. Jest books. Italian comedy at Paris. In the sixteenth century the theater became entirely secular, and amusement and religion were separated as a consequence of the general movement of the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages serious men collected jests and published jest books, which were collections of the jokes made by the *mimus*^ just as modern jests have been made by negro minstrels, circus clowns, and variety actors.⁴ At the end of the sixteenth century the Italians, "suffocated by Spanish etiquette, and poisoned by Jesuitical hypocrisy, sought to expand healthy lungs in free spaces of open air, indulging in dialectical niceties, and immortalizing street jokes by the genius of masked comedy." ⁵ The *commedia del arte* took this course. It was open to every chance of political and social influence. It became the recognized Italian comedy and was transported to the north as such. In each province of Italy the fixed characters

were independently developed, so that variations
were produced.
The type of play reached a climax in the middle of
the seven-
teenth century. Then it declined for lack of
competent actors.
It was the realism of everyday life. It tended
always back again
to the mountebanks, jugglers, rope dancers, etc.⁶
The *laszi* were
"business" which gave the actors time to
improvise. In the

¹ Scherillo, *La Commedia del Arte*, 90, 114.

² *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴ Reich, *Der Mimits*, 473.

⁸ Burckhardt, 316.

⁵ Symonds, *Catholic Reaction*, I, 55.

⁶ Masi, *Teatro Ital nel Sec.*, XVIII, 229.